

LAKE HARNEY WILDERNESS AREA LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN

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LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN SUMMARY

Lake Harney Wilderness Area

Acres: 325

Location: East Seminole County; Section 31, Township 19, Range 33

Dates of Acquisition: March 2006

Key Resource Issues:

The Lake Harney Wilderness Area is an approximately 325 acre property located on the St. Johns River and the northwest shore of Lake Harney. This site is home to an historic crossing of the Florida Eastcoast Railroad, Native American shell middens, several bald eagle's nests, oak hammocks and mixed hardwood swamps. This site also contains extensive floodplain marshes associated with Lake Harney which serve as important feeding grounds for wading birds and as a natural filter improving water quality.

The primary key resource issue is to protect and preserve property along the St. Johns River, which along with its tributaries, is arguably the life-blood of Seminole County's natural environment. By preserving this land and its surroundings as much as possible, the ecologically-sensitive St. Johns River will also receive an increased degree of protection. It is essential to protect the water quality, native vegetation, and wildlife habitats of this region for conservation purposes.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

- <u>Security</u> Unlike some of the other Natural Lands properties, there is no caretaker residing
 on this property. All possible locations for access whether designated or not, are regularly
 evaluated and methods for control considered. The additional and more frequent presence
 of Parks and Recreation, SCNLP staff and Police, should act as an effective deterrent to
 vandalism. Security of the site will continue to be monitored and further corrective actions
 may be required.
- <u>Restoration</u> Restoration and possibly prescribed burning will be part of the resource management of this property. The pasture, floodplain and scrubby flatwoods will be the primary areas of focus for restoration efforts. Many native species are still present in scattered groups throughout the pasture, evidence that a natural seed bank still exists. The SCNLP will restore approximately 30 acres of pasture to mesic flatwoods using slash pine, shiny lyonia, gallberry, wiregrass and other species known to be found in this habitat.

Restoration of the pasture areas of the property may assist in protecting the water resources adjacent to the property by acting as a filtering source for water runoff. Additionally, the floodplain has had extensive mitigation work which has restored the hydrology and protects the shoreline along the St. Johns River.

- <u>Fire</u> There are two fire dependent natural plant communities on this property, scrubby flatwoods located on the south side in the south pasture and the floodplain marsh.
- Invasive and Exotic Species The amount of invasive exotic plants on the property is fairly extensive. Exotic plant species found at this site include cogongrass (Imperata cylindrica.), tropical soda apple (Solanum viarum), camphor tree (Cinnamomum camphora), Brazilian pepper (Schinus terebinthifolius), Ceasar's weed (Urena lobata) and air potato (Dioscorea bulbifera).

Exotic animal species found at Lake Harney Wilderness Area are the brown anole (*Anolis sagrei*), Cuban tree frog (*Osteopilus septentrionalis*), and the Mexican bromeliad weevil (*Metamasius callizona*).

Currently, feral animals are not a problem on this wilderness area. If a problem arises, services will be contracted out to licensed trappers to remove the nuisance animals. Feral animal monitoring will be part of the monitoring plan established for the site.

- Wildlife and Plants A cursory survey has been performed. There are three bald eagle nests. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) tracks these nests through their bald eagle nest tracking program which surveys every nesting season. The Natural Lands Program keeps the FWC reports on file in their office. There is a small population of gopher tortoises found mostly in the pasture areas and scrubby flatwoods. Reintroduction of fire will enhance habitat for tortoises. Various listed wading birds such as snowy egrets, little blue heron, tri-colored heron, and white ibis use the shoreline and pasture areas as forage sites. Land management activities will follow recommended FWC guidelines for the bald eagle and gopher tortoise populations.
- <u>Cultural Resources</u> Lake Harney Wilderness Area is a significant property not only because
 of its natural resources, but also because of the historical resources on the property.
 Significant historic resources will be interpreted for the public, while ensuring protection of
 these resources. In addition, the Natural Lands Program will coordinate with Division of
 Historical Resources on the protection and management of archaeological and historical
 resources.

There are at least two, and possibly three, known historical/archaeological sites located on the subject property. Even though the third site has not been positively identified on the property, it is listed in the Florida Master Site File.

All three of the sites have been dated from the St. Johns I period (500 BC to AD 800) to St. Johns IIb period (AD1300-1513).

Key Land Use/Recreation Issues:

Lake Harney Wilderness area is bisected by an historic railroad corridor that extends through the County. Through Seminole County's Trails Program, this has been developed into an

unpaved nature trail known as the Flagler Trail. Throughout much of eastern Seminole County, the Flagler Trail provides passive recreation to equestrians, bikers, and hikers who wish to view the natural beauty of this region. Existing uses on the property include hiking, equestrian, non-motorized biking and picnicking.

General Description:

- Access There is one park and walk access located at the eastern end of the property on Osceola Fish Camp Road. It is an improved grassy parking area planted with native landscaping. There are 15 parking spots in a 2700 sq. ft. area. There are also 4 additional horse trailer parking areas in an area of 4050 sq. ft. Seminole County has a commitment to incorporate pervious material wherever feasible. A combination of split-rail fencing and wheel stops are employed to contain cars in the parking areas
- <u>Public recreation</u> This site is open for hiking, non-motorized biking and equestrian use along the Flagler Trail.
- <u>Coordination of agreements</u> Seminole County has entered an agreement with the Florida Division of Forestry for oversight of timbering operations. This partnership may be used to accomplish a timber thinning of the east side of this site.

Wilderness Area Seminole County, Florida Lake Harney LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN

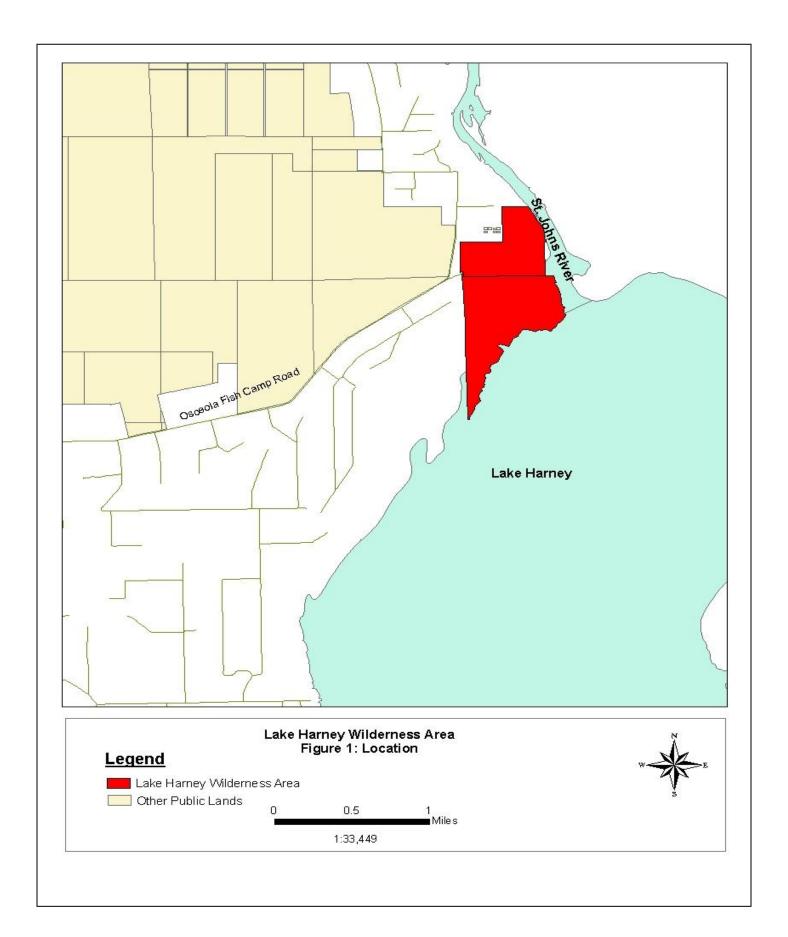
INTRODUCTION

This document provides guidelines for land management activities to be implemented within the Wilderness Area over the next ten years.

WILDERNESS AREA OVERVIEW

Regional Significance

The Lake Harney Wilderness area was primarily purchased to protect and preserve property along the St. Johns River, which along with its tributaries, is arguably the life-blood of Seminole County's natural environment. This has been reinforced by the designation of the St. Johns River as an American Heritage River. By preserving this land and its surroundings as much as possible, the ecologically-sensitive St. Johns River will also receive an increased degree of protection. It is essential to protect the water quality, native vegetation, and wildlife habitats of this region for conservation purposes. Preserving this site will also enhance awareness of the existing cultural and historical resources as well as providing a connection to our more recent history by preserving the property that surrounds the Flagler Trail in this area.



Acquisition History

On September 14-15, 2006, the Florida Communities Trust (FCT) Governing Board met and selected the Seminole County's *Lake Harney Wilderness Area* project for funding during the FF6 grant cycle. *LHWA* is a 112-acre parcel located in the northeast corner of Seminole County in Geneva, Florida. This was a post acquisition project totaling \$2,810,200.00 (Two million ten thousand two hundred and no/100) (\$2,800,000.00 for acquisition, \$7,200.00 for appraisal services, \$3,000.00 for Environmental Assessments). Seminole County sought reimbursement from FCT in the amount of \$1,405,100.00, 50% of the acquisition costs. Funds for the purchase were from the Year 2000 Natural Lands Bond Referendum funds.

The reimbursement of 50% of the costs for LHWA provided a significant contribution in protecting the habitat along the St. Johns River and Lake Harney. *LHWA* provides visitors with hiking trails, interpretation and an overlook to the St. Johns River as well as birding, hiking, educational opportunities or just a quiet resting place.

NATURAL RESOURCES OVERVIEW

Natural Communities

Approximately thirty percent of Lake Harney wilderness Area has been altered from its original state and maintained as improved pasture. The remaining natural communities present include pine flatwoods, scrubby flatwoods, mesic and hydric hammock, mixed hardwood swamp, shallow marsh and cypress swamp. All plant community descriptions were taken from FNAI, 1991.

Pine Flatwoods

This habitat is characterized as an open canopy forest of tall slash pines (*Pinus elliottii*) and longleaf pines (*Pinus palustris*), and a dense ground cover of herbs and shrubs. Other trees include scrub oaks such as the myrtle (*Quercus myrtifolia*), and chapman (*Quercus chapmanii*), and shrubs like shiny lyonia (*Lyonia lucida*), and wild blue berry. Ground cover may include wire grass (*Aristida stricta*), golden aster (*Chrysopsis villosa*), and runner oak (*Quercus margarettiae*)

Fire plays a critical role in the physical development of Pine Flatwoods. Historically, this habitat has sustained fire every 1 to 8 years. Most plants and animals that utilize this habitat are adapted to periodic fire and many species depend on fire for their continued existence.

Scrubby Flatwoods

The overstory consists of mature slash (*Pinus elliottii*) and longleaf pines (*Pinus palutris*) with scattered sand live oaks (*Quercus geminata*). Understory plants include Chapman's oak (*Quercus chapmanii*), tarflower (*Befaria racemosa*), scrub oak (*Quercus inopinna*), myrtle oak (*Quercus myrtifolia*), rusty lyonia (*Lyonia ferruginea*), and saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*). Groundcover includes sparse wiregrass (*Aristida stricta* var. *beyrichiana*), mock pennyroyal (*Hedeoma graveolens*), and other forbs. This is a fire dependent community and typically has a fire regime of 7 to 15 years.

Hydric Hammock

Hydric Hammock plant community is characterized as a hardwood and cabbage palm forest with an inconsistent understory dominated by palms and ferns. This is the most common forested community on site, dominated by a canopy of cabbage Palm (*Sabal palmetto*) and live Oak trees (*Quercus virginiana*). Other tree species include Red Cedar, Laurel Oak (Quercus laurifolia), sweetbay (*Magnolia virginiana*), and saw palmetto (*Arecaceae tribe Corypheae*).

Hydric Hammocks occur on low, flat, wet sites where limestone may be near the top and frequently extends beyond the surface. The normal hydrologic regime must be maintained in this plant community. If the water table is lowered, the Hydric Hammock will gradually change to mesic conditions.

Mixed Hardwood Swamp

This habitat can be found along the extreme eastern end of the property. Bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*), and red maple (*Acer rubrum*) trees form a dense canopy which creates a shaded, cool microclimate for a diverse assemblage of wildlife. These swamps serve as important filters and flood storage areas for water making its way to Lake Harney.

Cypress Dome Swamp

Dome Swamps are characterized as shallow, forested depressions that generally present a dome shaped profile. Smaller trees grow in the shallow waters around the outer edge, while the bigger trees grow in the deeper water throughout the interior. Common plant species include the bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), swamp tupelo (*Nyssa sylvatica var. biflora*), Red maple (*Acer rubrum*), and Swamp bay (*Persea palustris*).

Floodplain Marsh

The floodplain marsh along Lake Harney and part of the St. Johns River has been disturbed and/or altered. The restoration project completed in 2006 has restored most of the area along Lake Harney and invasive species removal in 2010 has enhanced the area. Floodplain marsh is a fire dependent community and traditionally burned when dry, every 1 to 10 years. Natural Lands staff will be adding this property in their burn rotation.

<u>Fire</u>

Fire is an integral part of the Florida landscape. Before the influx of settlers, lightning fires would burn unimpeded through fire adaptive communities and landscapes until extinguished via changes in weather and/or fuel characteristics. Native Americans would also burn at various times of the year to attract wild game and to keep the landscape open for easy travel. Today, due to increased development pressures on conservation areas, fires must be managed under strict regulations and performed according to set criteria depending on the site. Seminole County hired the Nature Conservancy to develop a Prescribed Burn Plan for all Natural Land sites and make recommendations for the application of this important management tool.

The objective of prescribed burning at Lake Harney Wilderness Area is to restore the scrubby flatwoods and floodplain communities, promote species diversity, and reduce the accumulation of hazardous fuel loads and associated wildfire risks. This would also help to minimize and/or exclude smoke impacts to adjoining or nearby urbanized areas, roads and highways.

Wildlife

Lake Harney Wilderness Area's diverse habitats support an equally diverse assemblage of wildlife. Common species recorded on site include whitetail deer (*Odocoileus virginiana*), wild turkey (*Meleagris qallopavo*), grey fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*) and southern black racer.

A baseline study was implemented by NLD staff from 1996 until 2004. In 1998, a monitoring plan was developed to survey species using standard sampling methodologies for bird surveys,

herp arrays, drift fence, coverboards, gopher tortoise marking, and small mammal trapping. Nest boxes were erected and surveyed as well.

In 2006, NLD staff revised the monitoring plan to focus more closely on the effects of land management practices on flora and fauna. This property was purchased in 2006 and so has only been surveyed according to 2006 plan.

Listed Species

Several rare and listed species have also been observed including the American Alligator (Alligator mississipiensis), gopher tortoise (Gopherus polyphemus), sandhill crane (Grus Canadensis), Eastern indigo snake (Drymarchon corais cooperi) and Bald eagle (Haliaeetus leucocephalus).

Exotics

Florida's climate is not only attractive to humans, but also to invasive exotic species. An exotic species is defined as a species introduced to Florida, purposefully or accidentally, from a natural range outside of Florida. Some examples of exotic species in Florida include Brazilian pepper (Schinus terbinthifolius), air potato (Dioscorea bulbifera), old world climbing fern (Lygodium microphyllum), cogongrass (Imperata cylindrica), feral hog (Sus scrofa), Cuban brown anole (Anolis segrei), nine-banded armadillo (Dasypus novemcinctus), Eurasian collared-dove (Streptopelia decaocto), Cuban treefrog (Osteopilus septentrionalis), and walking catfish (Clarias batrachus). The State of Florida spends millions of dollars per year either directly or indirectly through grants, trying to control exotic species.

Since the impacts of invasive exotic species have both an environmental and economic impact, a non-governmental organization called the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council was formed. This organization provides a list of Florida's most invasive exotic species. The list is split into two categories: Category I species are those that are altering native plant communities by displacing native species and Category II species are those that have increased in abundance or frequency but have not yet altered Florida plant communities to the extent shown by Category I species. Lake Harney Wilderness Area has exotics from both categories.

Exotic plant species found at this site include cogongrass (*Imperata cylindrica*.), tropical soda apple (*Solanum viarum*), camphor tree (*Cinnamomum camphora*), and air potato (*Dioscorea bulbifera*).

An exotic management plan for plants has been development for all natural lands properties. A status of exotic animals will be developed over the next ten years.

Soils

Myakka/Eau Gallie Fine Sands (Type 20)

These are nearly level, poorly drained sandy soils in broad areas of the flatwoods, in depressions, and in areas between sand ridges and ponds and sloughs. The water table is between 1.0 and 3.0 feet below grade during the wet season.

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Okeelanta Flooded Soils (Type 23)

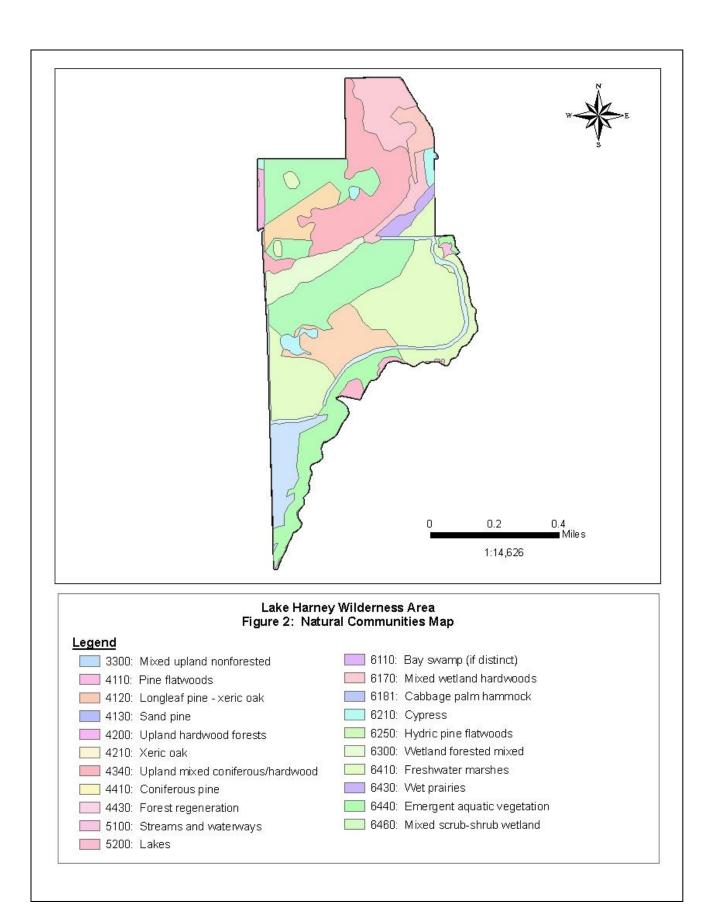
These soils occur in wide swamps adjacent to rivers, lakes and streams in Central Florida. The normal high-water elevation occurs from March through September, and ranges from the surface to one foot below. Recreational uses are limited due to flooding, wetness and excessive muck levels.

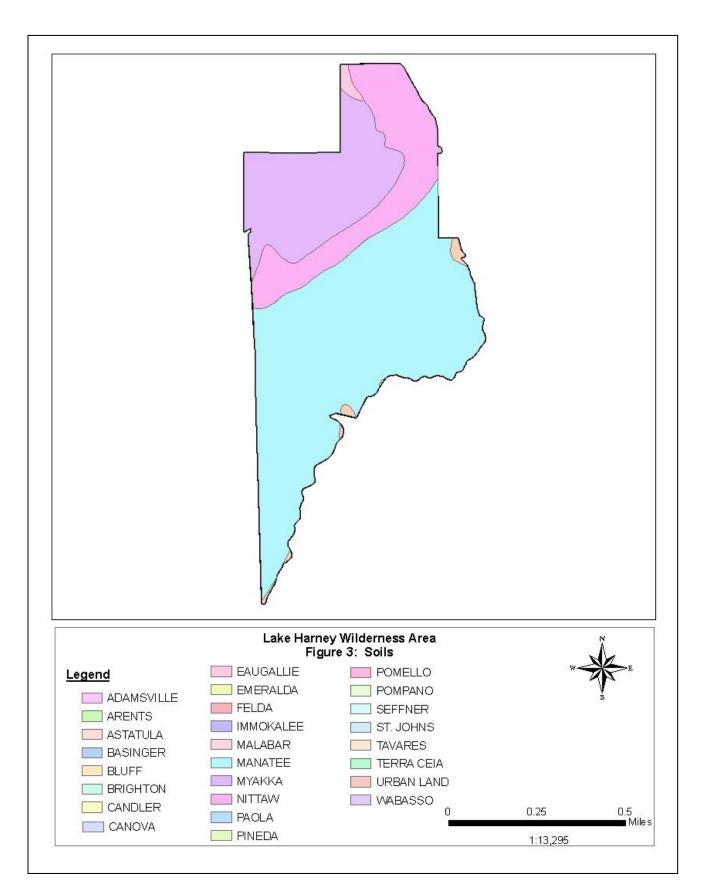
Holopaw (Type 19)

These are deep, very poorly drained soils that occur on low, broad flats in central and south Florida. The normal high-water elevation occurs from June through March, and ranges from the surface to 1 foot below. Recreational use is limited due to severe wetness and sandy nature of the soil.

Eau Gallie Series (Type 13)

These are nearly level, poorly drained soils on low ridges in flatwoods areas. Normal high-water elevation occurs from June through October, and ranges from the surface to one foot below. Recreational use is limited due to severe wetness and the sandy nature of the soil.





IMPLEMENTATION

Integral to the goals and objectives for managing acquired lands in an acceptable manner are protection and restoration of those lands where feasible. An important element in protecting the resources is to prevent dumping, poaching, and other illegal activities. Appropriate land management activities, such as prescribed burning, forest management, and removal of exotics, should be continued to protect the viability of the site.

Rules and Regulations

Seminole County Code Chapter 190 Section 4 establishes the provisions relating to management and use of the properties acquired or managed by Seminole County Natural Lands Program.

RESOURCE PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT

Monitoring

Monitoring natural resources is an important tool in gauging the overall health of an ecosystem. In 2006, a new Natural Lands Program Monitoring Plan was developed. According to that plan, monitoring at LHWA now includes gopher tortoise marking, photo points, plant transects, and small mammal trapping. Also, exotic treatment success will be monitored using photo points.

Gopher tortoise populations are monitored through a volunteer program. Post-burn burrow surveys are conducted by staff. The data collected from these two types of monitoring effort allow staff to estimate gopher tortoise populations on each property.

Monitoring Strategies

- Continue quarterly monitoring
- Continue volunteer monitoring program
- > Continue monitoring exotic species

Restoration

Restoration and prescribed burning will be a significant management component of this property. The pasture and flatwoods will be the primary areas of focus for restoration efforts. Many native species are still present in scattered groups throughout the pasture, evidence that a natural seed bank still exists. The NLP will restore approximately 30 acres of pasture to mesic flatwoods using slash pine, shiny lyonia, gallberry, wiregrass and other species known to be found in this habitat

Restoration Strategies

Continue to evaluate the need for restoration activity

Forest Management

Florida Statutes require public agencies to evaluate lands they manage for timber production. Planting of upland forest species may be a component of future upland restoration projects.

Forest Management Strategies

➤ The NLP will restore approximately 30 acres of pasture to mesic flatwoods using slash pine, shiny lyonia, gallberry, wiregrass and other species known to be found in this habitat

Fire Management

Fire dependent plant communities will be divided into individual burn units by installing fire lines and placed on a regular fire rotation. Once the pasture areas have been re-vegetated with native plants and the plants have become established, the areas will be added to the fire rotation

Fire Management Strategies

- Draft prescribed burn plan following guidelines from the Division of Forestry
- Divide property into burn zones

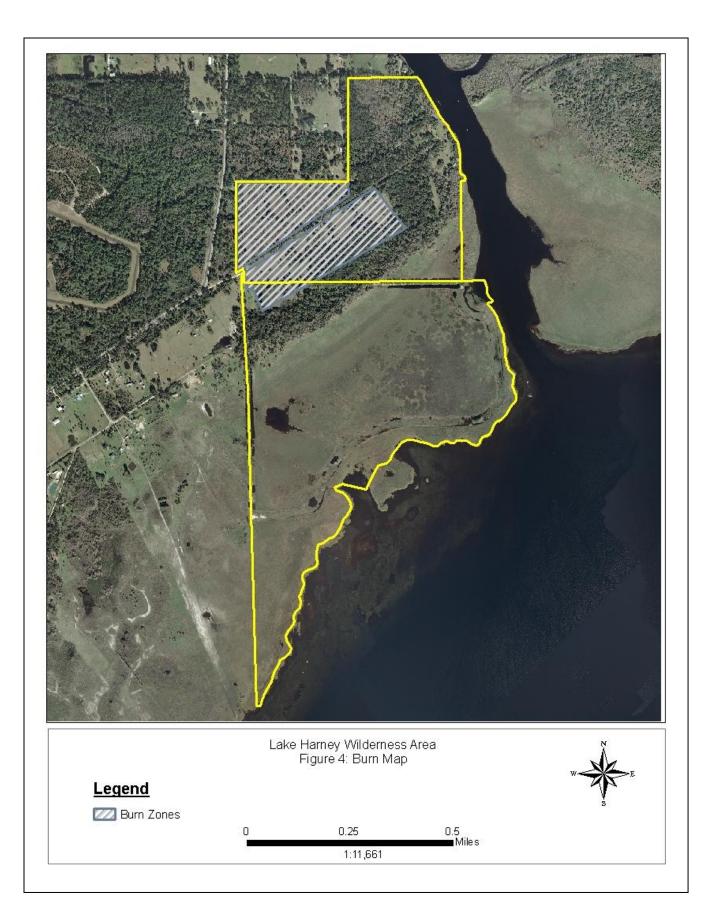


Table 2: Natural Community and Fire Return Interval

Plant Community	Fire Frequency for Restoration Fire Frequency	
		Maintenance
Floodplain Marsh	1 to 2 years	1 to 8years
Improved Pasture	1 to 3 years	1 to 3 years
Scrubby Flatwoods	3 to 5 years	4 to 12 years

Fire frequencies based on FNAI.

Wildlife

Continued habitat management through roller chopping, mowing and burning should provide optimum habitat for wildlife species. Wildlife observations will continue to be added to the NLP database.

Wildlife Strategies

- Continue to record wildlife observations.
- Continue small mammal trapping.
- Continue land management activities.

Listed Species

Surveys are conducted annually to verify the existence of listed plant and animal species. A volunteer program was established by Natural Land's staff to mark and record information on gopher tortoises. Volunteers complete at least four hours of training before they are certified to participate in the mark-recapture monitoring effort.

Plants

There have been no listed plant species identified on the property to date. Proper management of natural communities will enhance the site for any listed plant species found. Inventory of listed species has been scheduled for this property as part of the 2006 Monitoring Plan for the Natural Lands Program.

Animals

Listed animal species include the American Alligator (*Alligator mississipiensis*), gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*), sandhill crane (*Grus Canadensis*), Eastern Indigo snake (*Drymarchon corais cooperi*) and Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*).

Listed Plant and Animal Strategies

- Continue monitoring for gopher tortoises
- Continue small mammal trapping
- Continue annual listed plant surveys.

Exotic Species

There are several exotic plant and animal species within LHWA. These invasive species often out compete and displace native flora and fauna.

Plants

Exotic plant species found at this site include Cogongrass (*Imperata cylindrica*.), Tropical soda apple (*Solanum viarum*), Camphor tree (*Cinnamomum camphora*), and Air potato (*Dioscorea bulbifera*).

Animals

Exotic animal species found at Lake Harney Wilderness Area are the brown anole (*Anolis sagrei*), Cuban tree frog (*Osteopilus septentrionalis*), and the Mexican bromeliad weevil (*Metamasius callizona*).

Exotic Plant and Animal Strategies

➤ Get all Category I exotic species under maintenance control

<u>Cultural Resources Protection</u>

Significant historic resources will be interpreted for the public, while ensuring protection of these resources. In addition, the Natural Lands Program will coordinate with Division of Historical Resources on the protection and management of archaeological and historical resources. A review of the Master Site File quad sheets maintained by Department of State Division of Historical Resources indicates that there are three registered sites on the LHWA.

There are at least two, and possibly three, known historical/archaeological sites located on the subject property. Even though the third site has not been positively identified on the property, it is listed in the Florida Master Site File. These three sites are currently enrolled on the Florida Master Site File as **8Se11** (Huntingdon's Midden), **8Se12** (Cook's Ferry), and **8Se13** (Cook's Ferry/King Phillips Town Mound). The two Cook's Ferry middens are found on the easternmost border of the property along the St. Johns River and contain the following: ceramics, chipped stone, shells, glass beads, gold and silver works, and some animal and human remains. The two middens were disrupted in the early Nineteenth Century when Henry M. Flagler constructed a portion of the Okeechobee Railroad Line. Some remains of the once active railroad can still be seen today as the dividing line between the two middens.

The first site (8Se11) is located approximately one hundred sixty yards south of St. Johns River and one hundred thirty yards east of a small creek bed and is separated by a portion of the oak hammock. The midden contains predominately Viviparus snail shells. All three of the middens have been dated from the St. Johns I period (500 BC to AD 800) to St. Johns IIb period (AD1300-1513).

LAND USE MANAGEMENT

<u>Access</u>

There is one park and walk access located at the eastern end of the property on Osceola Fish Camp Road.

Access Strategies

- > Continue regular maintenance of public access area
- ➤ Maintain signs and kiosk



Recreation

Current recreational opportunities include wildlife viewing, hiking and equestrian use along the Flagler Trail and fishing along the St. John's River. Future plans for the site include a series of passive based recreational trails to enhance visitor experience.

Recreation Strategies

Continue regular maintenance of trails

Environmental Education

While no educational facilities exist on this property, it can be used as an outdoor classroom for students of all ages.

Security

Seminole County will be responsible for the security of *LHWA* and will post the specific hours patrons can be on site. These hours can be expanded with a permit granted by the County. Although public property is subject to vandalism and visitors may experience theft or assault, the area is included in routine patrols by Seminole County Sheriff's Department, who were provided with off-road vehicles for this purpose. Additionally, there is a volunteer caretaker who lives adjacent to the Project Site to assist with the security issues of the site.

Security Strategies

Continue with current security

ADMINISTRATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation Chart

An implementation chart of activities and responsibilities follows.

Lake Harney Wilderness Area Management Activity Implementation Chart

TASK	RESPONSIBLE LEAD	DUE DATE	COOPERATORS
RESOURCE PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT			
<u>Restoration</u>			
Evaluate need for restoration activity	NL	On-going	
<u>Forest Management</u>			
No current plan for forestry related activities			
Fire Management			
Develop prescribed fire plan	NL	2013	PS, DOF
Divide property into burn zones	NL	2013	PS, DOF
<u>Wildlife</u>			
Continue to record wildlife observations	NL	On-going	Volunteers
Continue with land management activities	NL	On-going	PW
<u>-</u>			
<u>Listed Species</u>			
Plants & Animals			
Continue monitoring for gopher tortoises	NL	On-going	Volunteers
Continue monitoring for Bald Eagles	NL	On-going	Volunteers
Continue with small mammal trapping	NL	On-going	Volunteers
Continue with listed plant species survey	NL	On-going	Volunteers
Exotic Species			
Plants & Animals			
Get all Category I exotics under maintenance control	NL	2012	PW
Continue with exotic species monitoring	NL	On-going	Volunteers
<u> </u>			
LAND USE MANAGEMENT			
Access			
Continue regular maintenance of public access areas	NL	On-going	PW
Maintain signs and kiosks	NL	On-going	PW
-			
Recreation			
Maintain regular maintenance of all recreational	NL	On-going	PW, Volunteers
resources			
Security			
Continue with current security	NL	On-going	
·			

KEY

DOF Division of Forestry PS Public Safety

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